

Dear Friend of RPM,

Last Fall (2022) we saw great need and dared to dream of a bigger ministry home for RPM. Our enrollment was increasing every semester. Our classes were nearly at capacity. Our coat drive provided 600+ people with winter coats and cold weather gear for themselves and their children. Unfortunately, the odds of expanding were decidedly against us. Our building was too old to renovate or expand. We were committed to staying in our neighborhood, but the chances were slim of finding a suitable location since properties for sale were rare and prices were sky-high.



Then, the property right next to our office went up for sale. The owners offered it to us, hoping we would purchase it. They were grateful for RPM's work in the community and wanted to see it expand. Sadly, at the time we were spread too thin financially to consider it seriously, so our board wisely decided to say "No" to the offer and focus on keeping our literacy classes and family support services strong. Since many of those who depend on us are immigrants with serious financial and social challenges, we did not want to jeopardize our programs so essential to their well-being.

Then, No More Room

We started 2023 very encouraged. Generous year-end gifts along with grants from foundations that believed in us, put us on a solid financial footing. But Spring brought a new challenge. Faced with another semester of record enrollment we had to turn people away from our English literacy classes - we didn't have enough classroom space for everyone. As we prayed and looked for creative solutions, God provided the answer through a college intern and the Hispanic Center located just blocks from our office. They offered us free classroom space for an evening class. In March we added another 10-week beginner ESL course with a dozen adult students (pictured at right).



A Miracle Offer

While we were grateful for the off-site class, we knew it was only a temporary solution. It appeared the property next door was still for sale, but then later that Spring the owners visited our office to tell us they had received a full-price offer from someone else. My heart sank when I heard this. However,

they still really wanted us to have it and therefore were willing to sell it to us for significantly less than what they'd been offered. *Were we still interested?* We prayed. We consulted with city representatives, construction professionals, and community leaders. They all encouraged us to buy the property and move forward with our vision of a new ministry and community center that could potentially include housing for low-income seniors. We said "Yes."

Fast forward to this Fall

We once again had a record enrollment in our English, Spanish, and computer classes - 204 students. We have three classes meeting off-site; two at the Potter's House school across the street and one at Lee St. Christian Reformed Church about a mile away. We also have nearly a dozen students taking our SSL (Spanish) classes via Zoom. We are grateful for all the places providing space for our students, but this will not work long-term. It is time to expand.



One of our four evening ESL classes

Breaking News - The Property is Ours!

We secured a loan to purchase the property next door and *just this past week we closed on the property!* People have started giving toward our building fund and we've received \$5,500.00 of the \$280,000 we need to pay it off. Volunteer groups from Calvin University and South Christian High School helped us clean up the property so we are now able to use it for much needed parking. We've been advised to remove both our current 80-year-old building and the abandoned buildings on the property next door. So, our plan is to build a new ministry and community center on the combined space. Our dream of converting this neglected corner of the neighborhood into an icon of beauty and hope for our community is one step closer to reality.



Joel (Exec Dir) with RPM Board Members Michael and Matt

Meylin Reminds Me that People Matter More



However, everyday I'm reminded it's not about the numbers, or the building, it's about the people. People like Meylin from Nicaragua (pictured at left), who despite her fear and uncertainty, enrolled in both our ESL and computer classes and then purchased a laptop. She knows that increasing her English and computer skills will open doors to better opportunities and a better life--for herself, her family and the generations that follow.

I met with her recently to hear more of her story. Here's some of what she shared (translated from Spanish).

Before taking classes here I knew nothing about computers - well, I knew how to turn it on (laughs). And at this stage in life, one feels embarrassed and ashamed not to have those skills. It's frustrating. I'm so grateful for this ministry because you've received us here, not just me, but people from all over the world. [RPM students came from 12 countries this year.]

We've been treated so well, with patience; you've been so kind, and that not only feels good, but it gives us confidence to keep on learning. I'm grateful to God and RPM for the opportunities we've been given here. I just want to say "Muchas gracias" to those who support this place. Because of them so many countries are benefiting. I hope they are blessed so they can continue blessing so many of us who come here. Thank you to all those who make this organization possible.

So, on behalf of Meylin, and the over 600 students and clients we've helped so far this year with computer and English literacy classes, jobs, winter coats, housing, and citizenship - *Muchísimas gracias*. By praying, volunteering, and supporting us financially, you are making a better life possible for so many people. We are a local ministry that is touching the world by serving people from all over Latin America, as well as places like Sierra Leone and Ethiopia.



"Expect great things; attempt great things" (William Carey, 1792)

This is an exciting time in RPM's history. We've purchased property, we're adding a digital client-student management system, expanding our classes, and exploring a joint project with Samaritas to provide low-income, senior housing for our community in the floors above our proposed, new ministry space. Our vision, with God's help, is to transform this rather run-down corner of our neighborhood into a center of educational and spiritual hope, full of growth and learning for our neighbors and surrounding community.



Current RPM building at top left; recently purchased property bottom right.

We're Building for Their Future

It's both breathtaking and a bit scary... and we'd love for you to be a part of it.



An imagined artistic rendering of RPM's new home and our transformed corner

In 2024 we'll be starting a \$2.5 - 3 million capital campaign to create a new, expanded, multi-use, ministry center that will include: RPM offices, classrooms, and computer lab, and possibly retail space (we'd love to have a Latino-themed coffee shop). Our goal is to bring beauty, education, social support, and spiritual guidance to the people of our minority community who need it most.

As this year ends, and you look to where you want to bless others with what God has blessed you, will you consider Roosevelt Park Ministries? Please use the enclosed card to let us know how you would like to partner with us. You can also use your phone to scan this QR code.

It will take you to our Donate page where you can donate to our essential programs and services or make a donation or pledge to our property purchase and expansion.



We are introducing our neighbors to eternal hope by helping them live better lives in the here and now. Will you join us in making that happen?

Excitedly trusting God as we build for the future!

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Joel".

Joel B Groat
Executive Director, Roosevelt Park Ministries

*Roosevelt Park Ministries is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization, Federal Tax ID# 38-3305940
All gifts are tax-deductible, received with grateful hearts, and used to advance God's kingdom.*

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